

Like Pierrot The Clown by ALumpOfObsidianForAHeart

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Summary: Beaten back and wounded by the Losers' Club, It had no choice but to leave and find a new hunting ground. Far away from Maine, It has found somewhere with much easier pickings. But a 14 year old boy and his strangely wistful older sister may prove more of a problem than he had anticipated in more ways than one. It wouldn't be the first time Pennywise bit off more than it could chew

1. Chapter 1

"3...2...1...ready or not, here I come!" Cassie squealed in delight as her hands flew away from her face. She sprinted along the corridor and up onto the top deck of the cruise ship, still giggling with glee.

It was night, and Cassie and her sister were bored now dinner was over and the childrens' entertainment was finished for the day. She practically had to beg her mother to let her and her sister play hide and seek. Her mother had eventually relented. A little time without the girls would give her some time and space in the cabin alone to get a handle on her seasickness. Or the two bottles of wine she finished over her meal.

As Cassie burst onto the deck the sea breeze roared her white blonde hair into a flurry of frantic movement. They were still in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean, not yet near the many destinations in Europe she was dying to see. She began to run about the deck, eyes scanning for any movement or a flash of red fabric from her sister's dress. Of course, there weren't many places to hide on the top deck besides the loungers and tables, but the ship was so big there was plenty of room to run around and miss each other. It was more a game of creeping around to catch the other. The only rule was you had to stay on the top deck.

It had been at least ten minutes and Cassie was beginning to get frustrated. Surely her sister Daisy hadn't broken the rules and crept down below deck to cheat. She pouted and crossed her arms, looking out over the side of the ship. Across the distance where the sky met the sea the world was so black it was possible to believe that there wasn't a horizon at all. For all Cassie could have known they could have been still in a starless sky, lost in space.

She heard the lilting jingle of a bell behind her. She spun around and locked eyes with a clown lying beneath a deck chair who waved jovially at her with a pristine white glove. He wasn't like any clown she had seen before, he looked somehow old worldly. He certainly didn't look like any of the clowns that performed in the shows on board. His painted red grin travelled all the way up to his eyebrows, pointing to his bright orange hair. The light bounced off his shiny

silver suit, making up for the lack of a moon in the cloud smothered sky.

"Hi there, Cassie!" The clown chimed, his smile wide and his intense blue eyes gleaming. "Are you looking for Daisy?" Cassie's eyes widened and she gawped, "You know my sister?"

"Yes!" The clown giggled, "We're good friends, good friends, Cassie. She let me join in the game, but I guess you found me." Cassie smiled a little upon hearing his words, feeling the warmth of pride bloom in her chest. "I did, I found you. And who...are you?"

"Pennywise," The clown chirped with a shiver of glee, "Pennywise the Dancing Clown." Cassie smiled back, "Okay, Pennywise, let's go find Daisy." The clown's grin instantly fell like a down-turned horse shoe. "Oh, well it's *your* game, Cassie, you've gotta find her on your own. But I can give you a clue, that is, if you want one?" Cassie bobbed her head up and down expectantly and took a step towards him. She couldn't let her little sister win the game, especially since she was so far ahead in finding the clown as an extra perk. There was a brief pause. "Well, you'll have to come closer than that if you want to know!" He giggled, "Wouldn't want anyone hearing you cheating now, would you?"

Cassie could feel something thick and heavy sliding into her gut as she got on her hands and knees and slowly crawled towards him. The closer she crawled the more she examined his features, the oddly sharp teeth, the discoloured frills around his neck, the eyes she thought were blue were glowing amber, one veering off the line of sight. She crawled until she was inches away, until she could feel his hot breath on her face. "Pennywise," Cassie whispered, "Where's Daisy?"

"Come closer," Pennywise purred, "and I'll tell you." Despite her heart hammering against her rib cage she leaned in, tilting her ear towards him to hear him better. She felt something warm and wet drip onto the side of her face. A clawed hand burst out and seized her wrist. Before Cassie could scream it pulled her in and pressed down onto her mouth with its opposite hand, cackling manically as it crushed her airways shut. Tears of terror flooded her face, mixing with the monster's thick drool that looped from its ever hungry grinning lips.

It burst into high-pitched jeering, face hovering directly over hers, rows and rows of teeth fillings its whole mouth. It spat out the words, "Daisy's legs are in the engine room. Her arms are in the store. Her skin is in my stomach, and what's left of her is floating like all the others, and Cassie...oh Cassie, you'll float too!"

Cassie didn't make a sound when she died, or before when she was slowly devoured alive.

When her mother awoke sprawled on her bunk in a drunken haze she cast her eyes over the dark cabin. She couldn't see her girls, so it couldn't be too late. She was sure they'd be somewhere, getting up to mischief as usual. She was lucky she had such independent daughters, and she could always trust them to look out for each other. She turned and faced the wall, letting herself fall into a strangely dreamless sleep.

2. Chapter 2

Nora sat at the kitchen table chewing on her bottom lip. She clacked away at the buttons on her calculator, her eyebrows tightly knitted in focus. Every so often her right hand would stop and hover over the calculator while she'd jot down some numbers with her left hand. She picked up her notes and examined them for the fifth time. She hadn't made a mistake. She groaned and pressed her face in her hands. Money would be tight again this month. It wasn't yet noon and already the trials of the day were wearing her down. She hadn't even brought herself to open the post that still sat in a neat collection on the doormat. She was finding it harder to do anything of late. Even the simple things like vacuuming the floors and brushing her long chocolate coloured hair felt painfully taxing. The only thing she could find the energy to do was go into work 5 days a week at a little café in town. The hours were always long and the manager a cruel woman who enjoyed making fun of her. She hated it, but as the only living relative of her kid brother she didn't have much of a choice.

She heard the sound of a key scrapping into a lock, and the front door of the flat swung open. "Hey Nora!" Her brother yelled as he came barging in with a poorly concealed grin on his face. Her brother was an immensely gifted child and even at the young age of fourteen he was setting his sights on Oxford or Cambridge. Sometimes it seemed the only thing he wasn't good at was hiding his emotions. Nora sighed and leaned back in her chair, "What is it, Benjamin?"

"Nothing." He smiled sweetly, hands behind his back as he edged towards her, his straight face breaking into a smirk. He stepped closer and whipped out a card and a small gift box from behind his back and burst out into song "Happy Birthday to you! Haaappy Bir-"

"Oh, God, oh Jesus Ben stop, no singing, no-"

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR NORA! Haaappy birthday to you!" He plopped the gift and card onto the table over her notes. Nora couldn't help but smile as she pulled him into a tight squeeze and kissed his cheek, emitting a quick "gross" from under Benjamin's breath. Nora examined the box. She hadn't expected anything at all. She opened that card first. Their parents had taught them it was bad manners not

to. It was bright purple and glittery and emblazoned with the number "18." Nora laughed "Did you have to go for the one with the number on it? Makes me feel old."

"You are old."

"Thanks."

"Now open your present." Nora pinched it off the table between thumb and forefinger, giving it a little shake. She and her brother didn't have money. She didn't know what it could possibly be. She lifted the lid and gasped, her hand flying to her face, "Ben, you didn't...how did you...?" She picked out the sparkling golden sunflower pendent and clipped it around her neck. There was nothing she loved more on the earth than sunflowers. "Happy Birthday, Sis." He said in that serious voice that was only recently starting to deepen, reminding her of the man he was becoming.

Nora shook back her tears of thanks, rubbing her eyes with her knuckles and laughing. She was prone to getting too emotional too quickly nowadays. That or feeling nothing at all. "I'm not going to ask you where you got the money for that." Benjamin held up his hands as if in surrender, "I didn't steal it, I promise! Me and the guys just had a bit of a whip around that's all."

"Right," Nora smiled, resting her hand on her chin, "I'm just glad you seem a little more chipper after last night. You looked half dead this morning." It seemed in an instant that a storm had been tossed across Benjamin's features, the ghost of his smile stuck dead on his face. "Yeah," He mumbled, quickly looking down "I...I had a bad dream." Nora swallowed hard and asked, "About mom and dad?"

"No," Ben said, his voice expressing a little relief, "I was up reading late again before bed. I read the news about that cruise ship that came into harbour not far from here. Left Maine with 19 children aboard, rocked up here with none." Nora grimaced. "Ew. Sounds sinister."

"Tell me about it. You know when I read Dracula how I was always creeped out by that scene where he comes to England stowed away on a ship and kills everyone on board, picking them off one by one,

letting them lapse into madness and anxiety? I had a dream I was on that ship. Only, it wasn't a vampire that was on the ship with us, it was a..."

"A what?"

"It was nothing. It was only a dream." He didn't tell her about the clown. He didn't want to seem silly.

"Hang on," Nora began, "Aren't you meant to be at school?." Benjamin rolled his eyes so violently he thought they might have rolled straight out of his head. "Firstly it's the summer holidays, and secondly it's a Sunday. Jeez Nora, get your shit together." He teased. Nora winced and sighed with exasperation, "Oh. I know."

"Right I'm heading back out, the guys are waiting outside."

"Cool, you be careful yeah?"

"I will be." He picked up his rucksack and made his way to the door. He stopped, hesitated, "I love you Nora, you know that right?"

"Of course." She smiled, fiddling with her new necklace, "I love you more."

3. Chapter 3

Benjamin emerged from the flat, and walked over to the bike shed where his friends were waiting for him. The three of them were straddling their own bikes and chatting amongst themselves. The lanky blond, Noah, was the first to speak, "Yo Ben, did your sis like her gift?" Benjamin bumped Noah's fist, "Absolutely, she loved it."

"You know you could have just brought me upstairs instead, gift as I am" Charlie quipped with a wink as he gyrated his hips and slicked back his crow black hair. Benjamin scowled, "Oh screw you, man." The third boy with curly ginger hair and a few extra pounds smirked behind his hand and tittered, "You're really swimming at the shallow end of the gene pool Benny boy."

"Shut up Will, you're hardly one to talk."

"Right then!" Charlie announced, clapping his hands together, "Who's up for going down to the weir and popping a few cold ones?" He raised a plastic bag and inside the glass bottles clacked off one another. Will's eyes widened like two blue moons, "How'd you get *that*!?" Charlie tapped the side of his nose as Benjamin sat on his bike. "Well come on let's go, I've had enough of waiting around."

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The air was thick and heavy with the late afternoon heat. Swarms of tiny insects danced and darted across the surface of the water that shuddered when Benjamin skipped a stone across it, narrowly missing Will who was wading knee deep, bottle of beer in hand.

Benjamin looked up at the searing sun and took a swig from his beer. The liquid was warm, and the alcohol percentage low, but he was grateful he had a friend as resourceful as Charlie. A little too resourceful if anything. Benjamin definitely wasn't going to ask about how he got the money together for Nora's gift. He didn't steal it though so he hadn't lied to her. Although he couldn't help but feel a little guilt that he couldn't have done anything for her by himself. He knew how down she was lately.

He tried to shake his mind free of his worries and spoke up, "Hey, has anyone seen Marc lately? I swear it's been days since he's been out." The three boys exchanged glances, the relaxed atmosphere instantly dropping dead. Will cleared his throat awkwardly and said "I guess you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?" Benjamin grumbled, wishing that his friends would just go ahead and spit out what was clearly bothering all of them. Noah took in a deep breath and grimaced, "Marc doesn't want to go outside anymore. I've tried to coax him out, but he's refusing to leave his house. He's really scared of something, but he won't talk to us about it. We think he's losing his mind." Just as Noah finished his sentence Charlie snorted and spat on the ground, "Well if he's losing his mind we all are."

"Shut up, Charlie." Noah hissed back.

"Come on, no guesses to what he's afraid of!" Charlie barked and Benjamin gripped the bridge of his nose in exasperation. "Wait, hold up, what do you mean by that exactly?" His three friends went dreadfully silent, side eyeing each other, waiting for someone else to speak. Naturally it was Charlie who eventually spoke up. "Ben, have you been noticing anything strange going on lately?"

"Not anything out the usual, why?"

"Ever since last week when that ship came in with the missing kids, things haven't been the same around here. Two kids from the local primary school have gone missing too. Doesn't that seem odd to you?" Benjamin frowned heavily. He hated it when people weren't direct. "So? Are you trying to say that Marc's afraid to come outside because he's worried about getting kidnapped?"

"Not exactly," Will murmured, feet shuffling on the dusty ground, "We've all been seeing some weird shit around..." His words trailed off, and Noah and Charlie could see he wasn't comfortable with disclosing any more information. Charlie picked up the slack, but now even he looked nervous. "We've all been seeing this thing, it's like it's stalking us. We've all be seeing this...clown."

At the mere utterance of the word Benjamin's blood felt like it

dropped 10 degrees in his veins. The face he was pulling must have given away his sudden alarm. Charlie jumped on the opportunity, the confirmation electrifying him and lending him strength. "See! It's not just us, this is real shit right here!" Benjamin waved his hands in front of himself, scrunching up his features as if physically pained by the absurdity.

"No, stop, think about this logically. It was only a dream. Just a dream I'd probably given myself by reading creepy shit before bed. Maybe something in the newspaper mentioned a clown and it somehow got subconsciously linked to the disappearances and it's freaked us all out." Charlie groaned loudly and pointed at Will with a rigid arm, lips curling in annoyance, "Jesus fucking Christ, Ben, that's a piss poor explanation! Does Will look like the kind of guy who'd actually read a fucking newspaper!? Will barely has enough focus to read a post-it-note."

"Hey! I read!"

"Shut it, Will. Let me tell you this, I ain't read shit about a clown in the news. I *know* what I saw and it's not just a clown either."

Benjamin rolled his eyes and couldn't help but laugh out loud at the ludicrousness of his friends' fears, "What else are you seeing huh? A whole Commedia Dell'Arte cast? Have you seen Columbina and Scaramouche knocking around too? You sure the circus isn't in town? Everyone on some level is afraid of clowns, let's face it, they're fucking creepy, so what if we've all dreamt about clowns recently?" Charlie glowered, his dark eyes set on Ben's warm brown ones. He hated it when Benjamin talked nonsense, especially when he felt like he was purposefully trying to insult his intelligence. Charlie took a deep breath and spoke through his teeth, "Okay firstly I'm fairly certain a lot of words in there weren't even English, and secondly we're seeing this son of a bitch in the daytime, and at this point we're fairly certain this thing changes shapes. It plays off what you fear the most. It literally becomes your worst nightmares." Benjamin looked behind Charlie and could see Noah getting visibly worked up. His face had drained of colour and he wrung his hands over and over. It was at this point Benjamin couldn't help but feel his own heart rate increasing too. He was starting to get a head ache.

"Look," Benjamin sighed calmly, "I say before we go jumping to any crazy decisions, we sleep on this. I'll go around Marc's tomorrow, see if I can get him to come out." Charlie huffed and crossed his arms as Benjamin continued, "I'm going to head home. I'll be out tomorrow. Text me."

Benjamin picked up his bike from the dirt and peddled away quickly, trying not to think too much about the conversation that would continue to haunt his brain for the rest of the day.

4. Chapter 4

Benjamin writhed on his bed, quilt kicked to the floor and hands grasping at his sheets as he drifted in and out of sleep. His fever had come on quick in the night, and it left him in a cold sweat and a looser grip on reality. Slowly his limbs began to go limp, his breath shallowing and his heart rate steadily falling.

As soon as he opened his eyes he knew where he was. The first thing he smelt was the stink of the leather seats in the new car. Nora was chattering away at his side in the back seat. He looked straight into her eyes. So young, just fourteen, they always look so much brighter in this dream. He couldn't bring himself to look into the front of the car because he knew who would be there.

"You having fun back there having your ear chewed off, Ben?"

"Of course he is!" Nora retorted and their father laughed lightly, "You've got to stop speaking for him, Rory, give your brother a chance."

Benjamin didn't reply. *It's just a dream, I can wake up, I can always wake up, I can wake up before it happens,* He muttered over and over. His mother looked at him in the rear view mirror, taking her eyes of the road briefly.

"Something wrong champ?"

He knew the old stone bridge was just around the corner. It was weak. Only one car at a time. He could see it coming up on the horizon and he squeezed his eyes together so hard they ached. He'd seen this too many goddamn times. *Come on, wake up, wake up...*

He heard the horn blare out, saw the headlight of the speeding van ahead and felt his mom veering the car hard to the left, throwing them over the bridge. They plummeted through the air in a hail of bricks. When they screamed in unison they all sounded like children. That was something Benjamin would never forget, that chorus of screams that made his parents so scared they sounded like children.

They struck the canal, shattering the windscreen and the thin layer of November ice, and began to sink fast. The freezing water gushed into the car and began to rise higher and higher as he cried out, the only voice left. "Mom! Mama! Dad! Nora, wake up! Wake up! Please! Please!" His family sagged unconscious in their seatbelts bleeding and unresponsive. He went to undo his seatbelt, knowing what would happen next, knowing he was about to endure the playout of if he hadn't got out in time. It snagged as the water rose up to his neck, and then over his head. He kept yanking at the clasp madly as his lungs screamed for breath.

He gazed through the filthy water at his sister who now sat with her eyes locked on him accusingly. Benjamin felt like he'd been injected with ice. This had never happened in the dream before.

"Why'd you choose me, Benjamin? Why'd you let mom and dad die?" Benjamin opened his mouth to speak and it filled with water. He wanted to defend himself, to plead with her, to tell her that she was the closest person he could get to, that it wasn't a choice about who lived and who died but about who was closest at hand. Then his parents groaned in perfect unison, "You're the reason we're floating, Benjamin," He could hear a soft sobbing beneath their voices. "and you'll only make it right when you float too." They whirled around in their seats to face him, revealing their dead blue faces smeared with botched up clown face paint. Their lips snapped up into grotesque grins as they began to chant, "You'll float too! You'll float too! You'll float too!"

Benjamin hurled himself straight out of his bed with a throat splitting cry of terror, falling to his hands and knees and grappling for the bedside light switch. He flicked it on, and turned around to see the clown grinning just inches from his face.

Nora burst into the room as Benjamin shrieked. He snapped around to look at her and when he looked back the clown was gone. "What the hell happened, Ben!?" His hands were shaking. He began to cry. His trembling fingers lifted to his lips and from behind the cage he formed with them he began to stammer, "It..It..It..." Nora rushed over and enveloped him in her arms "It's okay, I promise, it was only a dream, it's okay."

"D-didn't you see It?"

"See what?" Nora asked gently.

He wondered if the clown only appeared to children, or maybe the vulnerable, they seemed to be who It was after. But wondering would not change the present. Nora held her brother tight, and he did not hug her back, only he let himself stare in horror at the little red helium balloon floating at the foot of his bed.

5. Chapter 5

Pennywise had assumed that the little brunette was staying up in case her brother needed her again. Even though she had appeared upset by her brother's distress, she had quickly settled back down to rest. She was clearly use to this sort of thing. She sat with her bare feet tucked up neatly on the couch, her knees bent up to her chest while the pale blue light of the television screen flickered across her face.

She was pretty, for a human.

She had large almost roundish brown eyes that were only slightly darker than her fawn coloured skin. It made her look like a doe, or a bunny rabbit. A prey animal. She was terribly small too, It thought she probably wouldn't meet 5ft 5 on her tip toes. Pennywise liked them small. Liked them bite sized. But It hadn't appeared to her because it had chosen not to. She was Benjamin's guardian and It couldn't have them bonding over their fears. It couldn't have them banding together. Its last defeat was still painfully fresh in its mind. It had to watch itself from now on, be a lot more careful. It needed Benjamin alone in this with no one to turn to.

Eventually her brother would make a fine meal. He was easy to scare and he had a strong light inside his heart. It was this light, this exceptional will to live that always tasted so damn good to a creature like Pennywise. It could also smell the gentle seasoning of childhood trauma. That was much welcome too, and that trauma was shared by his sister. It couldn't help but harbour a kind of curiosity for her.

It drifted a little closer until it was stood towering directly behind her oblivious form. It leaned its lips just inches from her hair and took in a deep breath, mouth gaping like a feline to drag in all the scents along its taste buds, analysing everything it could inhale. Beyond the initial smell of the cocoa butter shampoo she used It could smell her age. Just about an adult. She was just too ripe for Pennywise's taste. But then again, there was still something that was exciting Pennywise about her anyway, something childish that made him want to prey on her too, in spite of the technicality of her being an adult woman. There was something about her so definitely...childlike.

That wasn't all Pennywise could smell. It could smell the blood pulsing through her veins, the haemoglobin, her proteins, her meat. It had an impeccable sense of smell. All predators do. It could smell when its prey was scared, that absolutely scrumptious scent of adrenaline, norepinephrine, and that delectable dash of dopamine. But in this woman girl it could hardly smell much of that at all, even straight after hearing her brother's shrill scream. She seemed to be lacking in serotonin, the "happy" chemical. It made for an odd concoction, but it certainly wasn't unpleasant.

It was early in the morning, still dark outside, and Pennywise needed to rest. As It went to turn away, satisfied with Its new familiarity with this strange creature's scent, the girl turned the television off. She was never really watching anyway. It expected her to make a move to the bathroom or the bedroom, to get ready for a bed she should have been in long ago. But instead she just sat there awake, and It was growing bored of watching her. It'd retire to its sewers for now.

Not too long after It had left, Nora got up. She washed her face, brushed her teeth and filled a cup of water to sit on her bedside table. She got into bed and lay awake until the room went light.